Young people in the workplace
Introduction

*Young people in the workplace* contains a series of activities and resources to help students explore the issues around workplace discrimination. The activities help students to draw comparisons between the dramatised workplace issues and their personal experiences by looking at how concepts of difference, discrimination and harassment may operate in their daily lives.

The resources provide an opportunity for students to explore their own sense of identity and compare it with others. A variety of rights issues can be raised within the context of one situation. At work, issues of race, age, sex and disability discrimination may be encountered, and the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers may not be clearly defined. By exploring these issues and making students aware of the rights they should expect to uphold and have upheld in a workplace situation, they become empowered to act in situations where they see instances of unlawful discrimination in their own lives.

The accompanying DVD and script explores a potential real-life situation of young people entering the workplace. Case studies are provided which explore issues of sex, age, race, and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Aim

Young people in the workplace activities will:

- raise student’s awareness of human rights issues
- develop student’s decision making skills to enable them to find informed and practicable solutions to the issues of discrimination in the workplace.

The can be photocopied for class use and used individually or as an entire resource.

Learning outcomes:

In studying this topic, students will:

- investigate the importance of identity and ‘difference’ in establishing an understanding of human rights
- formulate an understanding of the balance between their own individual human rights and a respect for the rights of other individuals
- identify a range of human rights that apply in workplaces and the responsibility of employers and employees in upholding those rights
- understand key features of the laws that apply in the workplace with regard to discrimination, harassment and responsibilities of workers and employers
- apply the concepts of workplace human rights to their own lives
- use other people’s experiences in considering their own career possibilities and choices
- develop cooperative learning and decision making skills.
Activities/resources

- Activity sheet: How do you identify yourself
- Activity sheet: Case studies at work
- Resource sheet: Aspects of the law
- Activity sheet: Position cards
- Activity sheet: The workplace – your rights and responsibilities
- Script – Young people in the workplace
- Multimedia resource: DVD (8 minutes)
- Resource sheet: Aspects of the law
- Key questions: Rights in the workplace
- Activity sheet: Position cards
- Activity sheet: Decision making
- Resource sheet: Making a complaint with the Commission
- Activity sheet: Difference and discrimination
- Resource sheet: Difference and career planning
- Activity sheet: Three stories
Teaching strategies

1. Establishing the issues

- Activity sheet: How do you identify yourself?
- Activity sheet: Case studies at work
- Resource sheet: Aspects of the law

These activities help students to engage in new ways of thinking about themselves, and allow them to acknowledgement of any prior learning and understanding in the area of human rights in the workplace that they may have.

Using the How do you identify yourself? activity sheet, students investigate aspects of identification that individuals use, and explore the ways they identify themselves through a series of questions. Students may find it useful to work in pairs. A group discussion sampling some students’ answers could then be undertaken to ensure students have grasped the concepts explored.

The Case studies at work activity presents a series of 10 case studies with questions, showing a variety of rights issues that can come up in a range of workplace environments.

Students are required to identify the rights and responsibilities at work in each case. The questions provided are designed to provoke thinking and discussion about how best to balance the rights and responsibilities identified.

The case studies demonstrate a range of legal aspects in terms of current anti-discrimination legislation that applies in Australian workplaces. Students should use the resource sheet Aspects of the law, to assist them in working through the case studies to investigate the laws that apply in the different situations.

Students could do this activity individually, in pairs, or in small groups, depending on the dynamics of the classroom. The tasks for students require them to:

- identify the behaviours they see as inappropriate
- comment on what avenues are available to ensure the workplace is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment
- think about the balance of the identified rights and responsibilities in each case.

These issues could be raised for debate in a class discussion before moving to the next activity.

2. Young people and the workplace – themes, task, process

- Activity sheet: Position cards

This lesson prepares students for the activities that will follow their viewing (or reading) of the DVD (or script). If the themes and the task are set out beforehand, students will be equipped to think about what they see (or read) in terms of identifying the issues raised and the problems to be resolved.

The themes raised in the DVD/script are:

- What rights are legally protected in the workplace?
- What are the responsibilities that colleagues and employers have toward one another in the workplace?
- How can employees deal with problems of rights infringements in the workplace?
- How can young people deal with problems of sexual harassment, race, age and sex discrimination that might arise in the workplace?
The task is to work out a solution to the problems faced by Lian and Kenny in the DVD/script. Students must select the solution that best meets the need to balance Lian and Kenny’s rights with the rights of others, clarifies the employer’s role in achieving this, and also fulfils the law.

The process is to understand the issues to be raised in the DVD/script and then to use decision making skills to come to a solution. Teachers may wish to use the Position cards as a tool to encourage the discussion at this stage. The discussion should cover all points of view and their implications. The students will then be able to reflect on the nature of their proposed solution and understand the ways in which the issues raised may affect their own lives.

3. Watching the DVD

- Activity sheet: The workplace – your rights and responsibilities
- Script – Young people in the workplace
- Multimedia resource: DVD (8 minutes)

Students are each given a copy of the activity sheet called The workplace – your rights and responsibilities. The questions on the sheet are guides to the notes students should take during their viewing of the DVD. The notes will assist in recall of the range of issues that arise in Lian and Kenny’s workplace, and will be useful in informing the debate as students work toward a solution within small groups in later stages.

Students read the script or view the DVD and make notes about the facts of the situation: what has happened, who is involved, what the key issues are. Some of the key issues for identification might include:

- Identifying instances of sex discrimination:
  - in the conduct of the interview
  - in the behaviour of the manager and other colleagues toward Lian
  - in the access of training.

- Identifying instances of sexual harassment:
  - in the suitability of the questions, information and comments
  - in the working environment (e.g. screen saver)
  - in the physical behaviour and attitudes of colleagues.

- Identifying instances of race discrimination in stereotyping racial groups:
  - in ridiculing cultural practice
  - in perpetuating negative attitudes in community groups.

There may also be other issues that students raise. Allow the students to identify as many of these as possible themselves. Some prompts where necessary may help them focus on any issue they may not have considered.

4. Identify and discuss the issues

- Resource sheet: Aspects of the law
- Key questions: Rights in the workplace
- Activity sheet: Position cards

At this stage, the focus is on the teamwork element of understanding the problems faced in the workplace and coming to a unified position about a possible solution. Students should be divided into small groups.
There are different ways that the activities may be approached, and depending on the class in question, or on the cross-curricula issues you are focusing on, you may wish to have the small groups concentrate on one of the issues raised in particular. Alternatively, you could allocate different issues to each group, (e.g. sex or race discrimination, power-plays, sexual harassment). Or it may work more effectively in terms of goals and outcomes you wish to achieve to ask the groups to address each issue consecutively.

Students should already have a copy of *Aspects of the law* to refer to and the notes they have taken. Students are then given:

- a set of **Key questions** which should be covered in their discussions
- a set of **Position cards**.

The **Position cards** contain statements and comments from the characters in the DVD/script. Depending on the class dynamics, you may wish to encourage students to use the statements in a role-play of “what happens next?” in response to where Lian and Kenny have left the situation. This could be done within the small groups or across groups (with one or two representatives from each group in the role-play).

Alternatively, the cards may be used as launch points for further discussion of the issues and demonstration of the attitudes displayed in the DVD/script.

However you decide to use them, all **Position cards** should be heard by all members of each group for consideration in their discussions and their proposed solutions.

Presentation of the content of the **Position cards** should be followed by discussion within the small groups, using the key questions to highlight some of the views presented and to work towards possible solutions. Answers should be recorded for each of the **Key questions**, either individually or by a nominated scribe within each group.

### 5. Solutions and making decisions

- **Activity sheet: Decision making**

This stage is about exploring the techniques of problem solving in a group situation through reasoned debate to work toward a mutually agreed solution. Explain to students that these are the sorts of skills that would be required to negotiate a solution in an *actual* workplace that had issues for redress like Lian and Kenny’s.

After discussing the **Key questions** and coming up with answers to them, students should consider a variety of possible solutions to the problems encountered by Lian and Kenny, and recommend what they think will be the best solution. A **Decision making** activity sheet is supplied for use in this activity.

In their discussions, ensure that the students consider how the range of proposed solutions affect all the parties represented in the DVD/script – Kenny, Lian, the workmates, Mr Robinson (the manager) and Len (the supervisor). They should also recognise and consider any advantages and disadvantages that their proposed solutions carry with them.

At the end of the discussion students should decide what they might do to solve the problems in Lian and Kenny’s workplace. Solutions might include:

- Lian and Kenny talking to the manager about their concerns
- asking the supervisor to take up Lian’s and Kenny’s concerns with the other staff
- discussing the concerns with workmates to form a group that can raise the issues with management
- finding out about the company policies on discrimination and harassment
• seeking to have the issues of discrimination and harassment redressed in published and enforced workplace policy
• seeking to establish an education program for employees about workplace rights and the responsibilities workers and employers have to one another
• seeking advice from the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Some students may decide that the best solution for Kenny and Lian is to leave their jobs. If this is the case, discuss the perpetuation of discrimination issues that arise in situations where education about human rights is limited or quashed, and what the possible long term affects on the workplace might be.

6. Presenting decisions to the class

Depending on time allocated, students could then create a presentation that shows how they came to their final decisions. They should also reflect on the understanding they have developed about decision making on human rights and responsibilities in this context. For example, some ideas they might emphasise in their presentations could include:

• the power imbalance between different parties and how this could be addressed
• the importance of employees knowing what their rights are within the workplace
• the obligations employers have to ensure a safe working environment
• how and why it is difficult to satisfy all parties in an issue such as this
• the advantages of discussion over confrontation in coming to a decision.

Encourage students to choose a communication strategy that gets their message across in an entertaining and effective way. This may include a role-play or drama created as:

• a TV drama
• a debate
• a TV panel show
• a staged vox pop session
• a current affairs show
• an interview
• a courtroom drama
• a TV/radio advertising campaign.

7. Class discussion and students’ debriefing

Resources available:

• Resource sheet: Making a complaint with the Commission

The class can now review the issues they have identified and explored in their group presentations, including the difficulties they had in coming to decisions that suit all parties. For example, you might emphasise:

• what understanding students have developed about human rights in the workplace
• how individual rights work in relation to the consideration of the rights of others
• how effectively negotiation can be used to resolve conflict
• the advantages of discussion over confrontation in coming to a decision
• what could happen when a mutually agreed resolution is unable to be made
• what courses of action might not be appropriate in some circumstances and why
• when there may be a need to consult the Australian Human Rights Commission
• the need to bring all parties together to ensure that they understand one another’s rights and the appropriate ways to show respect for those rights.

The debriefing of students could also include information on how this situation would be handled if it came before the Australian Human Rights Commission. Some information regarding the official complaint processes of the Commission is provided at: www.humanrights.gov.au/complaints_information/

8. Applying the concepts

• Activity sheet: ‘Difference’ and discrimination

Students should complete the activity called *Difference and discrimination*.

This activity focuses on situations involving ‘difference’ and identity in the students’ daily lives – in the school, at home and with their friends.

Students should think about the sorts of ways they may consider themselves or others to be ‘different’, and about the ways those they consider different may identify themselves. They should then record some of their ideas in the grid on the worksheet.

9. ‘Difference’ and career planning

Resources available:

• Resource sheet: ‘Difference’ and career planning
• Activity sheet: Three stories

Students use the five stories from young people that are provided to complete the activity called *Three stories*.

This activity enables students to look at career choices that may be unconventional or may not be stereotypical, and to see what strategies young people have used to overcome the barriers, prejudice and discrimination they have faced and how it might apply to their own lives.